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SUBJECT Alleged CIA Operation Gone Astray

ANNOUNCER: Crossfire. On the left, Tom Braden. On the right, Congressman Robert Dornan. In the crossfire, New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis and Richard Schultz (?), anti-terrorism expert.

TOM BRADEN: Now let's do it to them before they do it to us. That seems logical, on Hill Street Blues. But the question before the house is whether it makes any sense in the real world.

Consider that mysterious bombing in Beirut last March. Eighty people killed, 200 wounded. We were all told that it was just another example of extreme religious factionalism. Lebanon, bloody Lebanon. Now it turns out that the bombing was a CIA operation, a CIA operation gone astray, but nevertheless the senseless carnage was paid for by you and me.

What do we do about this? Do we rein in the CIA? Or do we say, "Oh, well. Back to the drawing board"?

REP. ROBERT DORNAN: We have with us, Tom, Anthony Lewis up in New York City.

Tony, I'd like to ask you a question. Just when, if ever, do you or your liberal friends and associates ever believe in taking direct action? I know what you're against, but when are you ever for striking back? I'm curious.

ANTHONY LEWIS: Well, I'm for striking back in a war when there's aggression against us, Congressman, of course, as in World War II and in many circumstances. We must be prepared to defend ourselves and strike back at aggression. The question is

whether we should be engaged in secret lawless covert activities of this kind.

Now, I should say that I don't know that what Mr. Braden said is correct, that that bombing was paid for by the CIA. The evidence is hardly totally persuasive. But assuming that there was some CIA connection, that's very different from fighting a war to defend our moral view and our interests and our national security.

BRADEN: Well, Mr. Lewis, just let me point out that the Washington Post made the statement that it was a CIA operation gone astray, and they had no quibbles about it. They did not use the word "alleged."

The CIA has issued a statement. If you haven't seen it, let me read it to you: The CIA, quote, never conducted any training of Lebanese security forces, unquote, related to the event described.

Well, there's a big gap there between training Lebanese security forces and having to do with some hit squad that took a few matters into its own hands.

But let me introduce our other guest, Congressman Dornan and Anthony Lewis, because our second guest is an authority on terrorism. He's testified many times before the Congress on that subject. He's a professor of international politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and his name is Richard Schultz.

Now, Mr. Schultz, I have read the pamphlet that you prepared for the Defense Department which talks about low-intensity conflict, it talks about civic action forces, special groups. I mean it's written, pardon me, in the style of a document on how to prevent acid rain. And yet here you are saying, look, we have to do all these things. And what it gets down to, it seems to me, is the kind of tragedy that took place on March 8th in Lebanon.

RICHARD SCHULTZ: Well, I think what it gets down to is the question of war. And I think that that's what Mr. Lewis was talking about. We have to understand that in the case of this group, they have declared war on the United States. They are going to drive the United States out of the Middle East and they're going to do it through the most insidious means possible, including the bombing of the U.S. barracks, which the leader of the Shiite group that was the target of this strike, he helped plan that exercise.

So, this is warfare. We just don't realize that it's warfare.

BRADEN: But Mr. Schultz, wouldn't common sense suggest, after all the business about the vital quality of Lebanon and we had to be there, wouldn't common sense suggest, after watching what's happened in that bloody country over the last two years, that we just get out of there?

SCHULTZ: No, I don't think that that's suggested at all. We have an interest in the Middle East, and we have to defend that interest in the Middle East. And this is a group that has declared war.

LEWIS: May I come in here on that?

BRADEN: Yes, Tony Lewis. Come in.

LEWIS: Declared war. The question, though, is whether we mimic the lawless terroristic methods used by these evil people on the other side.

SCHULTZ: Well, what would you do? I mean how would you strike back?

LEWIS: Let me just give you a quote from that Washington Post story that struck me as just summing it all up: "A Lebanese intelligence man, justifying the bombing, said, 'You've got to stop terrorism with terrorism.'"

Well, you see all about you in Lebanon the results of that policy: lawlessness, and everybody is a terrorist. I don't want that.

SCHULTZ: The question I think you want to -- I think you should answer is: How should we strike back?

Now, if you don't like the way it was done -- and that is, we worked with an intelligence group that went out and then hired someone to do it -- would you be in favor of having our CIA work more closely to monitor how we strike at these groups?

LEWIS: I am very loath, to take your first point, to use foreign groups that we don't control. That same thing happened in the Congo and in other places. When you take on board lawless groups that we can't control, things are just naturally going to get out of control and not be what we want in America.

SCHULTZ: So you're in favor of a closer CIA involvement with groups to insure that instead of using an indiscriminate bombing, maybe we should have trained a sniper team to get this person.

LEWIS: Professor Schultz, do you think that we can be

immune from the poison that comes from those groups? I think it will come right back into this country. It worries me greatly.

The problem is not an easy one. Don't think I'm unaware of that. It's a very difficult problem in a world full of really nasty people. But I don't want to see that nastiness seep into our bloodstream.

REP. DORNAN: Anthony, let me clarify a couple of things here that I think are unfair to our CIA and the United States.

Number one, the Washington Post, more than any other paper in the country, carries with it this heavy burden of always looking like it's breaking some new hot story. The story yesterday and today is under Bob Woodward's byline. But on March 24th -- and that's not so long ago -- The Post had another story under the byline of Joe Piccirillo (?) and Ed Cody that we were training teams in Honduras and in Lebanon and in a dozen other countries to act against terrorists.

Now, that line jumped out at me, about "We have to fight terrorism with terrorism." But that was a Lebanese line.

What Shultz said is far more interesting. And here he is in the Middle East at this moment in Israel saying that the Talmud itself, Israeli religious, or Hebrew religious writing, said, "If someone is attacking you, then make haste and destroy him," if he's coming at you with lethal intent.

So, it isn't fighting terrorism with terrorism. It's fighting terrorism with lethal self-defense.

Now, Tony, if there was a group putting together the dreaded Islamic bomb, they were playing around with a nuclear device, I think even Tony Lewis would write a column that says, "Get them with lethal self-defense before they blow up a whole city."

Am I correct?

LEWIS: Congressman, let me first make reference to your first point about the story. The story does leave some holes in doubts, which is why I said at the start, after Mr. Braden's opening question, that we can't altogether assume that this thing happened exactly as stated. I agree with you one has to have a certain caution about that.

Now, as to the other thing. The Talmud is part of a system based on law. It is one of the traditions that Jews have given to the world and to this country. And we in America are perhaps the most law-based society on earth. I want it to stay that way. I don't want to jump to a conclusion that somebody's a

terrorist without a trial, without any open process at all.

It's difficult. I repeat, we're up against really mean, horrible people, in many instances. But I don't want to start bombing left and right without any way of knowing...

REP. DORNAN: We don't have to do it left and right, but we have to do something.

BRADEN: Congressman Dornan and Mr. Schultz, let me --you mentioned make haste, you have to make haste. Here is the National Security Council Adviser talking about not this operation, but counter-terrorism. Quote: For counter-terrorism to be effective, we must be able to act quickly. We cannot be bogged down in interminable consultation and debate.

Now just let me ask you, do you think it would have been better if we bogged down a little bit over at the CIA in internal consultation and debate before we sent that squad up to blow up a hotel?

SCHULTZ: First of all, Congress knew that these sorts of operations were going to take place.

Now, I think the question -- and again I want to address it to you -- what kind of force do you want to use? And if you don't like this, why not have a closer involvement of CIA...

BRADEN: Because...

SCHULTZ: ...some group that goes after a leadership that is responsible, responsible for the killing of over 200 Americans.

BRADEN: Okay. But now just let me...

SCHULTZ: And we're not talking about an indiscriminate group.

BRADEN: You mentioned the sniper bullet. That would have been an easier thing to do. I just want to remind you of what happened to John F. Kennedy.

SCHULTZ: Well, again, John F. Kennedy wasn't responsible for giving the directions to drive a truck into a building that killed 200 Marines.

BRADEN: No. But John F. Kennedy was responsible for trying to assassinate Fidel Castro. And there are some people who have studied the matter closely who think that Castro got it back.

LEWIS: Let me just remind people of one thing about the CIA and this point about law that I'm speaking of. Ten years ago the CIA was caught out having done a lot of lawless things beyond its charter. There was a Rockefeller Commission that put out a big report. A member of the commission was, in fact, Ronald Reagan. And we vowed at that time that the CIA was going to walk a tight line of lawfulness and reporting fully to Congress. That has slipped.

SCHULTZ: Which it's done.

LEWIS: No. You heard the Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator Leahy, saying he had not been properly informed.

SCHULTZ: Moynihan said he was. Moynihan said he was informed.

LEWIS: Yeah, but Leahy is the current Vice Chairman, and he started an inquiry himself because he was not abreast of what was going on.

We know what happened with the mining of the Nicaraguan harbors. They were not informed.

SCHULTZ: That's not correct. That's not correct, Tony.

REP. DORNAN: There was much controversy that some senators were sitting, bogged down with their work, and they weren't listening carefully when they were being briefed.

BRADEN: Well, now wait a minute. Wait a minute. Look, let's take that whole Nicaraguan operation. We have a law, the Boland Amendment. I don't know whether you voted for it or against it.

REP. DORNAN: I did. Everybody did. It passed unanimously.

BRADEN: All right, everybody passed it. All right. It says the CIA can conduct no activity intended to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Well now, what are we doing in Nicaragua?

REP. DORNAN: Ah, but Tom, that's a separate issue. It can be debated...

BRADEN: What's a separate issue? The issue is whether or not anybody...

REP. DORNAN: It can be debated on its merits. But

we're talking about terrorism. I don't think Tony Lewis answered specifically the idea of a gang of little wild Shiites playing with nuclear devices.

BRADEN: All right. That's a good point.

REP. DORNAN: But let's come back. If Tony read the whole story, then he read that we now, after the fact, discovered photo imagery, either radar imagery or actual low-level photography, of the very van that killed almost 300 Marines making -- excuse me. It was making practice runs on the front of our Annex Number 2 of our embassy, a simulated mock embassy, that led up to the September 20th bombing where dozens of people were being killed.

Obviously, if we could have determined what they were doing, we should have surgically taken them out.

Cap Weinberger says not with naval aircraft carrier fighters, attack planes on a strike. We have to do it with counter-terrorism methods, covertly.

SCHULTZ: Tom, I think you asked the right question. And the broader question is, shouldn't we have -- should we have a policy that leads us to try to move governments, like the Nicaraguan government, out of power? And I think that the problem with the Reagan Administration's policy to this point is that they've been doing something covertly that we need to have a public debate on and make a decision about in our public policy circle.

BRADEN: Okay, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Schultz. We're going to talk about, right after the break, about whether or not Mr. Reagan is conducting too much war too covertly for the interests of a democratic country.

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REP. DORNAN: Tony Lewis, I'd like to ask you again, a little bit different direction here. Obviously, mass media, liberals in mass media, when they approve of something, like our obvious covert help to the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, they don't try to discredit that policy and tear it up and write about it. It's only when they don't approve of something in foreign policy do they jump all over it.

Do you approve of our helping the guerrilla fighters in Afghanistan?

LEWIS: Yes, I do, Congressman. And I was very much opposed, and wrote about it, to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Of course I was. And we must do everything we can to

defend that country, difficult as it is, right on the border of the Soviet Union, a very long distance away. But, yes, open aggression we have to resist.

SCHULTZ: Would you do it openly?

BRADEN: Mr. Dornan, are you suggesting for a moment that liberals, such as Tony Lewis, or myself, believe that Mr. Hussein Fadhallah, if that's -- if I pronounce his name correctly -- who is believed to have engineered the bombing of the Marine Corps barracks, should go unpunished?

REP. DORNAN: Oh, no, no, no. Liberals want to punish him. But you pray to God that he'd get a heart attack or some fast terminal disease. Liberals never know how to take action.

BRADEN: Let me make myself clear. And I think I speak for Mr. Lewis. And he can make himself clear if he wishes. What I want to be clear about is that I believe in punishing terrorism. But I don't believe in punishing terrorism where you kill 80 innocent people and injure 200 bystanders. And I think that kind of thing is going to get this country into a pack of trouble.

SCHULTZ: How would you do it, Tom? All right, so you don't like that tactic. What would you do? You don't want to call in an air strike, because that's indiscriminate. How are you going to do it?

REP. DORNAN: And that's why Cap Weinberger has a problem with this issue.

BRADEN: I'll tell you what I would do. I would do a -- pardon me. I was about to swear. I would do a heck of a lot better job of training a covert operation than, obviously, Bill Casey is doing.

Now, let me tell you something about Casey. I was in World War II with him in the O.S.S. He is one heck of an operator. But he learned his trade, for the CIA job he holds, in a total war where anything went. All you had to do was go to Bill Donovan and say, "Look, I want to hang off the back of an airplane and drop a bomb on a squad over here in the trenches." And Bill would say, "Fine. Let's give it a try."

REP. DORNAN: Tom, he didn't have to be accountable to Tony Lewis or to Senator Leahy and a bunch of liberals who are wringing their hands over bad guys like Fadhallah.

BRADEN: But it's not World War II. That's my point.

SCHULTZ: But here is the problem. What we have to



decide is how much leeway we want to give the CIA to be involved in operations. The reason they don't want to assist a group like the one that blew up the building is because of the charter, which says that you can't be involved in assassinations.

REP. DORNAN: I feel Tony -- I feel him both wringing his hands and chuckling up there in New York.

Go ahead, Tony.

LEWIS: I'm not chuckling, because it's a very serious subject. But there's an assumption here that I think we have to get behind.

We've been talking as if the only resource the United States has in a terrible world is covert action or force or terrorism, or whatever. You know, there's such a thing as politics and brains and planning.

We never should have been in the pickle we were in Lebanon. And we can also mention the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which set loose all kinds of dragons that should not have been set loose.

The Shiite Moslems in Lebanon used to be the most peaceful, submissive people. They have been radicalized by political events.

SCHULTZ: And by Khomeini?

LEWIS: And you've got to do some thinking.

And by Khomeini.

SCHULTZ: ...by Khomeini, also.

LEWIS: Absolutely. I agree with that.

SCHULTZ: We have to look at what they do as not simply an action in Lebanon, but the Shiites in Lebanon are part of a larger policy that goes to Khomeini, that goes to the PLO. And so this -- by our being out of Lebanon, I don't think it's going to eliminate the problem of attacks against us in the Middle East.

LEWIS: No, it's not. But let me just give you an example.

I think the most useful thing that could be done to calm the situation of the Shiites in South Lebanon is being done right now, and that's the Israeli withdrawal from that area. That was

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the best thing to do, far more effective than any bombs and other things.

You have to think, as well as be a terrorist.

SCHULTZ: But don't we have here, Tony, really some small cells? And these small cells, whether or not the Israelis pull out of Southern Lebanon, are still going to be attacking either the United States or Israel or other groups that they perceive -- that Khomeini perceives as being part of a threat.

REP. DORNAN: I think the key here is covert action. Let me ask Tony.

Do you believe, Tony, in any covert action whatsoever under any circumstances?

LEWIS: Well, I will tell you that I find it very hard to say I do not believe in any. But if you look at the activities, the desperately wrong activities: Sending poisoned diving suits to poison Fidel Castro. That was a foolish thing. The interventions in Chile. The whole business in Nicaragua. The result of all those things is to give us a black eye and to destroy what our greatest strength in the world. Not terrorism.

Why are we strong in the world? It's our economic power and our moral force. People admire us because we're a law-abiding country, a decent, humane country. And I don't want to throw that away.

REP. DORNAN: Why is the Soviet Union strong? Why is the Soviet Union perceived as equally strong, or by many Third World nations as stronger than we are strong?

LEWIS: Fear only, Congressman, I think. And a willingness to give money, in some cases, when we're not.

But if you ask most ordinary people in the world which system they would prefer to follow, I believe it's our system, because I believe in our system, as you do. And I think it is a much more decent, humane one that people want to follow. Don't let's bring it down to other people's level.

BRADEN: Let me ask Mr. Schultz one last question. Maybe it's the last one.

Look, the President seems to rely on covert action more and more. And Bill Casey sells him on it. And we're doing more and more of it.

Now, Mr. Lewis brought up the last CIA investigation.

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And it was decided at that time -- and I don't know why congressmen don't go back and read it -- it was decided that the CIA would engage in covert operations only when they could be kept covert and when they were very, very small.

Now, why don't we do that?

SCHULTZ: Well, I think, in fact, in this case, if you're talking about Nicaragua -- and that's what we talked about earlier -- we have to make a decision on whether or not we want to do this. And if we decide we want to do it, we have to do it overtly. Paramilitary operations of this size, I think, are very difficult to keep covert.

But by the way, to go back to what Tony Lewis said, the final report of the Church Committee actually said that the CIA was not a rogue elephant, that the CIA, in fact, was not running amok, as he suggested.

BRADEN: We didn't say it was a rogue elephant. We just said it carried out a bad operation.

SCHULTZ: But further, in this particular instance, I think that Casey may support certain kinds of covert action, but there's a great deal of resistance within the intelligence community and within CIA among all those people that went into the operations side thanks to Admiral Turner. And so what we have is people at CIA who support Turner's definition of covert action: that it can't be controversial.

BRADEN: Okay. I'm sorry, we're out of time.

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REP. DORNAN: Tom, the poisonous element here is the word suicide. We don't fight fire with fire, we're not willing to send our men out to die in suicide raids. This is what they do to us. That requires direct, precise, lethal means to stop them before they kill.

BRADEN: There is no question there ought to be precise, direct, lethal means. But it ought to be carefully planned so that you don't murder a lot of innocent people.

I am chary of Secretary Shultz and others who say we've got to get at the terrorists right now.

We have to look into it and we have to do it right.